



State of Utah

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Natural Resources

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August 11, 2004; revised November 23, 2004

TO: Minerals File

FROM: Paul Baker, Senior Reclamation Biologist *PBB*

SUBJECT: Site Inspection, UMETCO, Wilson-Silverbell Mine, M/037/027, San Juan County, Utah

Date of Inspection: July 1, 2004
Time of Inspection: About 11:10 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.
Conditions: Mostly clear, 80's
Participants: Rahe Junge and Frank Barnett, UMETCO; Paul Baker, DOGM

Purpose of Inspection:

The operator requested that the Division inspect part of the site to see if it meets release criteria.

Observations:

Vegetation on the Wilson site contrasts sharply with the vegetation at Silverbell. There is some perennial vegetation at Wilson, but not much. Most of the vegetation in Photo 1 is weeds. I did not take cover measurements at Wilson; it seemed pretty clear that the site did not meet vegetation cover requirements.

Some of the areas adjoining the Wilson site have good cover (Photo 2—note the unvegetated waste pile in the background), and the ponds area near this pile have a lot of cover from fourwing saltbush (Photo 3).

The waste pile at Silverbell was apparently planted at the same time and using the same methods as at Wilson, but the results are much different. Photo 4 is typical of the site although there are a few places (Photo 5) with less cover.

I estimated the perennial vegetation cover in the reclaimed areas (except at the Wilson waste pile) to be 45 percent. Vegetation cover in nearby undisturbed areas is 34 percent.

The operator has been working to control Russian knapweed, and while this has been mostly successful, there are still a few patches (Photo 6) within the mine area and on adjacent land.

While we were walking around the site, we noticed the smell of smoke and wondered if smoke was drifting in from some of the wildfires to the south and west. We then noticed a nearby juniper (Photo 7) that had been struck by lightning. The organic duff below the tree was smoldering with a little flame occasionally. Mr. Junge and Barnett were going to put it out after I left.

There are a few structures that were left for the postmining land use, but, as far as I am aware, all structures that were supposed to be reclaimed have been taken out.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

Vegetation is adequate in the Silverbell area and in the area of the ponds that these can receive final release. These areas need to be delineated on a map for inclusion in a revised reclamation contract.

There is not enough vegetation on the Wilson waste pile for release. The operator should try seeding this area at least one more time. The slopes are not so steep that it could not be drill seeded, and the operator could also disk the site then immediately broadcast seed. In either case, the operator needs to take steps to ensure the work is done correctly and that this is documented.

To maximize the chances for success, the operator needs to:

1. Ensure that good quality seed is used. Seed should be purchased from a reputable dealer, and no tests on the viability should be older than 18 months (9 months for shrubs and broadleaf forbs). Certified seed is recommended.
2. If the seed is drilled, precautions should be taken to be sure it is not drilled too deeply and that the drill is working properly.
3. If the area is broadcast seeded, this needs to be done almost immediately after disking.

PBB:jb

cc: Rahe Junge, UMETCO

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Photo 5. An area on the south side of the Silverbell pile. There are a few bare areas like this with some minor erosion,.



Photo 6. Russian knapweed.



Photo 7. A juniper that was hit by lightning with some of the burned soil around it.